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so that both forms must be considered by one interested in social institutions as constituting true marriage. The prestige which is derived from a Church union, however, is of appreciable significance; sufficient, indeed, to motivate weddings at which the children and even grandchildren of the principals act as attendants. A man and woman may live together as *placées* ten or fifteen years or more before they have amassed the necessary amount to pay for a legal marriage. It is only when parents of young people are prosperous enough to pay for a Church marriage that their union receives the stamp of approval of the Church, for the Church wedding involves considerable expenditure in terms of Haitian peasant economy. A "first class" wedding, for example, calls for the payment of 47.50 gourdes; a "second class" ceremony, 40 gourdes; and the least expensive, or "third class" rite costs 34 to 36 gourdes, while in addition to this, five gourdes must be paid the assistant who rings the church bells, and a fixed fee of 25 gourdes is assessed for the civil registration of the marriage. The wedding ring is, of course, indispensable; a modest one, of gold, costs 60 gourdes. Food and drinks served at the festivities following the Church service cost, conservatively, another fifty gourdes, while if an ox is slaughtered to provide a more elaborate feast, the amount is correspondingly greater. Finally, the person who reads the necessary prayers before the festivities begin and the musicians who play for the *bal* must also be compensated. It can readily be seen, therefore, how a man and woman may live together in a *placée* union for years before their resources permit a legal marriage.

Whatever the type of mating, the first steps toward betrothal are taken by the young man. Though he has courted the girl of his choice and his proposal is acceptable to her, customary procedure demands that she refer him to her parents, whereupon his parents appear before those of the girl to make their plea on his behalf. If both families reside

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●584 in the same district, the background of the young man is well enough known so that no investigation is necessary, though unfailingly a long and formal discussion of the suitor, his qualities, and his prospects ensues. If his home is some distance away, however, meticulous inquiries are made not only concerning the young man and his immediate family, but of
584 his ancestry as well. Should the suitor live near the home of
212 the young woman, as usually happens, his own parents come with a *lettre de demand*. In earlier days the "letter" was written on flowered paper with a lacy border, but today plain
[603] colored paper does very well. When presented, it is wrapped
[824] in a green silk handkerchief, "for hope" — the handkerchief costs about five gourdes, and a similar amount is given the scribe — and is usually carried by the oldest man of the family; that is to say, the paternal grandfather if living, or if he is dead, the father, accompanied by the mother and per-
[198] haps the other grandparents. Today it is said that in the valley of Mirebalais the custom of presenting these letters of request is often disregarded, but is by no means extinct.[1]

The family of the girl is always apprised of the exact time of the visit, and refreshments are on hand. No reply is given at the time of the delivery of the "letter," since the families of both the father and the mother of the girl must consent to the match before it can be finally approved. However, at the stage of the courtship which the presentation of a "letter" implies, this delayed answer is a matter of form, for if the proposal had not been acceptable, the girl would not have
[578] been allowed to see the suitor. The refusal of a "letter" has been known to occur, but this is regarded as a deadly insult, and deep enmity between the families follows. Should the family of the girl, not wishing to be abrupt, accept the "letter" and proffer refreshments to its bearers, but later return the same "letter" as a sign of rejection, even this would be
584 bitterly resented. Under such circumstances the young man
832 takes steps to obtain revenge by providing himself with a
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love-charm designed to insure the young girl's coming to him. He then uses all persuasion to give her a child and, this achieved, abandons her to show his contempt for the family that has formally refused to accept him as a son-in-law.

Usually, however, the visit is returned by the family of the girl, bearing a "response" of acceptance wrapped in a red silk handkerchief, "for victory." And just as the family of the young woman had known in advance of the coming of her suitor's relatives, word of the favorable verdict is now sent through indirect channels, so that the family of the young man may also be prepared to receive the emissaries who come on behalf of the girl.

With this formal acceptance of the young man's suit, the wedding waits until he has accumulated the requisites for a household. Custom dictates that even should he be prepared, the ceremony must be delayed for several months while he remains in a probationary state, to assure the family of his fiancée of his worthiness. The young woman is also under surveillance during this time, when she may be asked to help her future mother-in-law with the housework, and particularly with the washing and ironing of linens. Generally a period of from two to three years elapses before the bridegroom accumulates enough to fulfill his obligations in marriage. During this time the family of the young woman is acquiring the things she is expected to bring to her husband: linens and dishes — though in the poorer peasant families these items would not be provided her — cooking utensils, water-containers, knives, forks, and other things needed for the household. Her father also presents her with a horse, a donkey, six or seven pigs, the same number of goats, as well as chickens, guinea-hens, and turkeys.

Tokens of virginity are not demanded before the match, since Mirebalais custom requires that the girl tell before her marriage whether she has had relations with other men. She may be sent away if it is discovered that she has told an un-

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truth, but the matter is recognized as one which concerns only her husband and herself, and if he is willing to keep her, it is his own affair. Consensus of opinion in Mirebalais is that the percentage of girls who do not have pre-marital sexual relations is relatively small, but the belief is expressed that chastity is more prevalent among country women than among those of the town, where, in turn, it is more frequent than in larger centers such as Port-au-Prince. Even though pre-marital relations are commonplace, however, the pregnancy of an unmarried girl is regarded as both reprehensible and unfortunate, and she is severely beaten for it by her family. In such cases, if the father of the unborn child will take the girl, his parents are sent to bring her, but where the parents of the man refuse to ask for the girl because they do not approve of her, then, if he still desires her, he must himself face the anger of her parents. Should he not wish to come for her, she may either remain with her family or seek work in another community. In any event, her child will be well cared for by her family, and no reproach will attach to it because of the circumstances of its birth.

Before a mating of any type is consummated, the familial spirits must be notified of the approaching event so that they may be well disposed toward it, for no union where this is neglected can enjoy happiness or peace. One Mirebalais woman was pointed out as an object lesson of the necessity of doing this. Though a devotee of several gods, neither she nor her husband was willing to perform the necessary rites for her gods before their marriage. She was suffering from an acute case of melancholia after the birth of her first child, and the prevailing opinion was that she was going mad because of the neglect of her duty toward her deities. Shortly before a woman goes to her husband, therefore, a *couvert sec* for the Rada deities is given both by herself and by her betrothed. If the family of either the young man or the woman possess deities of the powerful Pétro group, more inclusive offerings

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596 626 help one who, for example, has run afoul of the law because of attendance at a forbidden *vodun* dance and needs a certain sum to pay a fine, or who in some dispute with a neighbor has had a judgment of the court entered against him. Obviously, therefore, the family head, who holds the power of withholding family support from one in need of it, is not flouted except under great provocation.

596 584 626 Another instance of the exercise of the family head's power is given when a man or woman desires to marry or to enter into the relationship of *placage* with someone held undesirable by the elders of his group. Should this oldest member in particular indicate his disapproval of the proposed match, it is most unlikely that the mating would take place. The reasons of the elders may be based on situations quite unknown to their younger relative who proposed the match; the existence of old enmities between the families of the two young people would perhaps necessitate inflicting the humiliation of a refusal when the "letter" was presented. If the young people persist, the elders may say: "Do what you like, but we will not support you," and should they fail to heed this warning, trouble for them is believed inescapable, since it is held that the elders thus place a curse on the new family. Nevertheless, when difficulties do arise that the two cannot cope with alone, the mother of the one in trouble would do her utmost to help, despite family displeasure, and would use all her gifts of persuasion to soften the attitude of the family elders until she succeeded in having the ones who had defied the family edict taken back into the group. Some degree of estrangement would persist and, as has been seen, might cause a man to find it desirable to make his home with his wife's people. The elders may also take the initiative in arranging marriages, exerting pressure on a reluctant young man whose inclinations have directed him elsewhere, in favor of a young woman of desirable family. But should such a marriage not

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be successful, he can count on the members of his family for financial and moral support.

These are not all the rights of the older members of the family, especially of the family head, over their juniors. All elders may punish by beating, though the oldest member of the family exercises that right most freely and may chastise those who are themselves grown men and women. If there is gossip about a boy or a girl, the family head calls the culprit to reprimand him or, if he believes the case a serious one, to beat him. Among the peasants, particularly, grown men go down on their knees before their elders, when so ordered, for a beating. Such punishments may be particularly severe if the culprit does not soon ask pardon, for since all who are older have the right to beat a younger relative, it sometimes happens that the punishment administered by the head of the family is not considered adequate, and another takes up the stick when the family head has put it down, so that two or three wands may be broken over the back of a stubborn offender. If such a one were to fight back, he would become "accursed," ceasing any longer to be considered a member of the family, and even though no legal steps might be taken to disinherit him, he would lose all caste. This right to beat is accorded by custom rather than by law, but an adult beaten by one of the elders of his own family would think long before he would sue. "There is always a consultation, and a man is discouraged from going to court."

Lest the impression may have been given, in considering the role of the elders and their relationship to the younger members of the family, that it is those in the father's line alone who are concerned, it must be emphasized that relatives of both parents exercise substantial control over a person. More than this, since marriage constitutes an agreement between families as well as between an individual man and woman, it follows that both paternal and maternal grand-

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769 17 a *mangé* is given, and that evening, when the feast ends, dances are held. Two or three *tonnelles* are provided, the most important of these being the one where the Martinique cycle, the social dances most beloved by the ancestors, is danced. In one of the remaining two a European *bal* is held, and in the other are the *vodun* dancers. Thus even in connection with a commemorative Church mass for the dead the *mangé morts* and the dancing of African dances are included.

595 177 178 [554] The institution of plural marriage, which is socially recognized though not legally sanctioned, is obviously African. Though the *placée* is held in respect and her place in society carries no reproach for herself or her children because of any connotation of immorality, it is of significance for an understanding of the manner of cultural change that prestige in marriage goes with the monogamic union blessed by the Church, and that the "wife"—the woman who is addressed as "Madame"—holds definitely higher social position than the *placée*. Officially the Haitian State is in accord with the position of the Church and recognizes only the European monogamic marriage. Socially, however, African plural marriage is not only tolerated but accepted as a matter of course, and in those instances where plural marriage takes on its most exuberant form, as when men of position have as many as six or seven *placées* in addition to a legal wife, its very size tends to give such a family group, or at least its head, the enviable esteem of his fellow-citizens.

17 [593] [606] [583] Within the family, the deference toward older members and the duties and attitudes toward parents-in-law are African both in form and in spirit. The exaction of guarantees from a young man before marriage, and the necessity of his proving to the family of his fiancée that he can support her, are perhaps in their generalized form universals, but as found in Haiti show once more a retention of specific aboriginal traditions. On the other hand, such aspects of marriage as the [584] formal *lettre de demand* sent when a match is arranged, or the

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fact that a family will often strike out for itself, deserting the parental home, show a European independence foreign to native African thought. Yet the arrangement of meal-times, and the fact that a wife rarely eats with her husband, are African, as are the modes of correction, especially the feeling that flogging with a stick is the best disciplinary method. Indeed, the characteristic snap of the fingers employed by the Haitian to indicate a beating is exactly that which is used in Dahomey to signify beheading! In the attitude toward children African traditions have been warped by European custom, which has introduced a certain hardness of feeling that, whatever the cost, children must be brought in line with social convention, together with a resulting harshness of treatment that is anything but African.

Another important facet of Haitian life in which the effect of contact is telling includes art and recreational activities. Perhaps because of the conditions of slavery, or the difficulties of life after independence had been attained, much of these forms of African tradition has been lost, not to be replaced by corresponding borrowings from European sources. Woodcarving, an outstanding element in the æsthetic life of West Africa, is almost entirely absent. Near Mirebalais lives a man who can carve a pipe in the likeness of a human face, but there is no similarity between the products of his craft and West African figurines or masks, and he is thought of as an unusual person whose carving is an interesting but not socially significant avocation. It was stated, though without adequate corroboration, that before the Marine occupation Mirebalais boasted *vodun* drums on which heads " like the ones on these pipes " had been carved. Today the only form of decorative work in wood to be seen is the scroll-work designs which act as ventilating devices over doorways. They are done with the jigsaws of the carpenters, and no fertility of conception or felicity in composition marks these artistically crude efforts.

Other African crafts, which, though essentially utilitarian